

Talking points

Mississippi Department of Corrections - Commissioner's 5th Annual Statewide Meeting
May 9, 2007

Mississippi Agriculture and Forestry Museum
Jackson

(Commissioner Chris Epps will introduce Governor Barbour)

- Thank you, Chris.
- Mississippi is blessed with some outstanding public servants with whom I have the pleasure to work, and Chris Epps is one of the best in the country at what he does. I am grateful to him for the strong leadership he has brought to the Mississippi Department of Corrections.
- Chris, come back to the podium for a minute. I have a special honor today because our Commissioner has reached a milestone.
- Commissioner, on behalf of the state government you have served so well, I am delighted to present you with this certificate recognizing your 25 years – yes, that's a quarter of a century – of service.
- That is a significant achievement, and I can't tell you how happy I am that Commissioner Epps reached this level during my term as Governor. It's just a pleasure to present this to a man who is so deserving of the honor.

- Y'all please stand and join me in a round of applause.
- Good leadership is a key to the success of any organization. Another key is a dedicated staff of employees who take their responsibilities very seriously.
- Today, as we celebrate National Correctional Officers' Week, I am honored to recognize officers in the Mississippi Department of Corrections for their bravery and courage.
- I and the general public place great trust in you, individually and as an agency of state government.
- The mission and overriding priority of the MDOC is to provide for public safety. The 3,067 dedicated, professional public employees of the MDOC do not take this responsibility lightly
- I truly appreciate the extremely difficult and dangerous job you perform daily. With more than 22,000 inmates incarcerated and about 30,000 offenders on probation, parole, house arrest, or earned release supervision, the work you do is increasingly crucial.

- What you understand is that the majority of current inmates will eventually be released from incarceration. They will eventually go home. It is for this reason that we all care about inmate programs, such as welding, machinery, cosmetology, agriculture, computer science, the GED and Adult Basic Education.
- You understand that your daily priority of protecting and promoting public safety does not stop with confinement. You realize that to be truly successful in reducing the number of individuals who return to prison you must offer programs that provide inmates skills to successfully live in their communities once released.
- Although many taxpayers in Mississippi may not have a vivid picture of what you do daily, they do support your efforts. Mississippians appreciate the work of correctional staff; they do realize that corrections is a necessary part of the criminal justice system
- It has been said that courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear. While courage is a fundamental part of a correctional employee's job, keeping peace in the prison demands even more.
- We are recognizing five MDOC employees who have been nominated for Employee of the Year, as well as more than 100 MDOC staff members who received recognition for their professionalism, dedication and hard work

- To the five nominees, on behalf of all Mississippians, I want to express my sincere appreciation to each of you for the manner in which you exercise your duties. You are held in high regard by your colleagues. We salute your integrity, your service and your dedication and offer you our deepest respect and thanks.
- I proudly stand with you as we serve the citizens of the State of Mississippi.

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